

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 NEA-10 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 IGA-01 MC-02 /095 W

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R 101302Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 152

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 5470

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

GENEVA FOR SAUNDERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS TS

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT TRIMS ITS DEFENSE REQUESTS

1. SUMMARY: MINDEF KHEFACHA TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT GOT HAS TRIMMED ITS MILITARY AUGMENTATION PACKAGE IN LIGHT OF LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE BUT GOT STILL SEEKS TO DEVELOP MINIMUM AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY IN LIGHT OF LIBYAN THREAT. IN THIS CONTEXT GOT WILL DEFER ACQUISITION OF AIRCRAFT AND PROCEED WITH PURCHASE OF SAM'S AND RADAR EQUIPMENT. KHEFACHA SAID THAT GOT HAS
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ALSO DECIDED NOT REPEAT NOT TO HAVE WIDE ASSORTMENT OF

SOURCES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND IMPLIED THAT GOT WILL CONCENTRATE ON BUYING AMERICAN. GOT FEELS THAT IMPROVED HAWK MISSILE IS TOO EXPENSIVE, AND IS WILLING TO TAKE HARD LOOK AT CHAPARRAL AS SUBSTITUTE. EMBASSY CONSIDERS GOT'S DECISION TO MODIFY MILITARY PACKAGE TO BE VERY ENCOURAGING AND PROPOSES WASHINGTON DISPATCH EXPERTS TO TUNISIA IN OCTOBER TO BRIEF GOT ON CHAPARRAL. EMBASSY ALSO PROPOSES WASHINGTON CONSIDER EXTENDING INVITATION TO KHEFACHA TO VISIT U.S. AT EARLY DATE. END SUMMARY.

2. ON SEPTEMBER 9 I MET WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE KHEFACHA AT HIS REQUEST. KHEFACHA STATED THAT GOT HAS MADE DECISION NOT REPEAT NOT TO HAVE WIDE ASSORTMENT OF SOURCES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS THIS POSES IN TERMS OF REPLACEMENTS AND SPARE PARTS, AS WELL AS IMPAIRING EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION. HE SAID GOT HAS ALSO REACHED CONCLUSION THAT BECAUSE OF CONTINUING NEED TO ENABLE ECONOMY TO REACH "TAKEOFF" POINT ONLY LIMITED FUNDS CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY PURPOSES. ACCORDINGLY, GOT HAS DECIDED TO DEFER PURCHASE OF NEW AIRCRAFT UNTIL PERHAPS 1976 OR 1977 AND TO CONCENTRATE INSTEAD ON ACQUISITION OF SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES AND RADAR NETWORK. GOT DESIRES AN INTEGRATED AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM BUT WILL MOVE TOWARD THIS OBJECTIVE IN STAGES IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESOURCE AVAILABILITIES.

3. RE SAM'S, KHEFACHA RECALLED THAT ORIGINALLY USG HAD QUOTED FIGURE OF \$95 MILLION FOR NINE HAWK MISSILE BATTERIES, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN WITHIN RANGE OF TUNISIAN CAPABILITIES ON HOPEFUL ASSUMPTION THAT USG COULD CONTINUE \$15 MILLION FMS CREDIT (TENTATIVELY EARMARKED FOR FY76) ON ANNUAL BASIS OVER SEVERAL YEARS. HOWEVER, SUBSEQUENTLY GOT WAS INFORMED THAT ONLY HAWK MISSILE SYSTEM AVAILABLE IS MORE MODERN, SOPHISTICATED VERSION WHICH, INCLUDING TRAINING, WOULD COST SOME \$215 MILLION. THIS IS FAR TOO EXPENSIVE, AND WAY BEYOND TUNISIAN CAPABILITIES. THEREFORE KHEFACHA ASKED WHETHER USG COULD REEXAMINE SITUATION AND SEE WHETHER IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE AFTER ALL TO LOCATE NINE BATTERIES OF NON-CONFIDENTIAL

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IMPROVED HAWK SYSTEM AT ORIGINAL COST.

4. RE RADAR, KHEFACHA SAID GOT HAD AT ONE POINT, CONSIDERED PURCHASING RADAR FOR SOUTHERN TUNISIA ONLY, SINCE GOT HAD RADAR CAPABILITY IN NORTH. HOWEVER, IN VIEW GOT DECISION TO AVOID MIXING EQUIPMENT, GOT INTENDS TO PURCHASE COMPREHENSIVE RADAR SYSTEM FOR WHOLE COUNTRY FROM ONE SOURCE. (WHILE KHEFACHA DID

NOT SAY SO, THE IMPLICATION WAS THE GOT WOULD PROBABLY WISH TO BUY AMERICAN RADAR.)

5. KHEFACHA STRESSED THAT ALL GOT WANTS IS A MODEST DETERRENT AGAINST LIBYAN THREAT -- ONLY "A PIECE OF CAKE, NOT THE WHOLE CAKE." VERY SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS, HE CONTINUED, ARE NOT ONLY TOO COSTLY BUT UNNECESSARY FOR THIS PURPOSE. WHAT TUNISIA WANTS IS A MINIMUM AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY, BUT AT THE SAME TIME ONE WHICH IS EFFECTIVE ENOUGH TO KEEP AN UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBOR FROM CONSIDERING TUNISIA "A WALKOVER."

6. I REPLIED TO KHEFACHA'S PRESENTATION BY EXPRESSING MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE ORIGINAL HAWK MISSILE SYSTEM REMAINS UNAVAILABLE, BUT UNDERTOOK TO QUERY WASHINGTON TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER IN FACT THIS CONTINUES TO BE THE CASE. I SUGGESTED IN ANY EVENT THAT GOT CONSIDER SERIOUSLY SUBSTITUTING CHAPARRAL FOR HAWK MISSILES. THESE MISSILES, I SAID, ARE LESS SOPHISTICATED AND LESS COSTLY -- AND THUS SEEM TO MEET THE CRITERIA SET BY MINISTER. I NOTED THAT MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT HAD UNDERTAKEN TO ACQUIRE CHAPARRALS, AND THAT GOTMIGHT WISH TO CONSULT WITH ITS MOROCCAN FRIENDS CONCERNING THE EFFICACY OF THIS WEAPON. I WENT FURTHER AND PROPOSED RECOMMENDING TO WASHINGTON THAT IT SEND GROUP OF EXPERTS TO TUNISIA TO MAKE DETAILED PRESENTATION ON CHAPARRAL. ON BASIS ON THIS PRESENTATION GOT WOULD BE IN POSITION TO VERIFY THAT CHAPARRAL BEST TAKES INTO ACCOUNT BOTH ITS NEEDS AND RESOURCES.

7. KHEFACHA SHOWED INTEREST IN ALTERNATIVE SAM AND CONCURRED IMMEDIATELY WITH PROPOSAL THAT USG EXPERTS VISIT TUNISIA TO BRIEF TUNISIANS ON CHAPARRAL.
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 5470

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

GENEVA FOR SAUNDERS

WE AGREED THAT BEST TIME WOULD BE AFTER RAMADAN,DURING SECOND WEEK OF OCTOBER. WHEN I ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD WISH TO CHECK WITH HIS MILITARY EXPERTS BEFORE I PROPOSED DISPATCHING OF MISSION, KHEFACHA SAID UNHESITATINGLY, "NO NEED FOR THIS. I WANT THEM TO COME."

8. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION KHEFACHA EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE FMS CREDIT ASSISTANCE THAT USG IS UNDERTAKING TO PROVIDE TUNISIA, OBSERVING THAT USG IS ONLY COUNTRY THUS FAR TO BE DEFINITELY FORTHCOMING ON ADDITIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HE SAID THAT FRENCH HAVE OFFERED
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NOTHING ADDITIONAL, ALTHOUGH HE STILL HOPED THEY WOULD MAKE A "GESTURE"; BEST ITALIANS CAN DO IS POSSIBLE SALE OF TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT (WHICH IN ANY CASE, HE SAID, GOT MAY BUY FROM CANADA); AND GERMANS CAN ONLY PROVIDE CERTAIN TYPES OF NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT. ALLUDING TO GOT DECISION NOT TO HAVE VARIED SOURCES OF EQUIPMENT, KHEFACHA SAID ALMOST APOLOGETICALLY THAT GOT MIGHT OBTAIN ONE OR TWO PATROL BOATS FROM COMMUNIST CHINA BUT COMMENTED THAT "ONE SWALLOW DOES NOT MAKE A SPRING." IN ANY CASE

HE NOTED THAT PATROL VESSELS AVAILABLE FROM USG ARE
TOO LARGE FOR TUNISIAN PURPOSES. (APPARENTLY THIS VIEW
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